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the newsreels of infant exercises). Like Blake, too, Makavejev sees children as the victim of society and the potential agent of revolution. Thus, the psychotic's regression to infancy is an act of political liberation. The final image of *Sweet Movie* shows the children's corpses coming back to life, breaking the dramatic illusion and reaffirming survival, in contrast to *The Grande Bouffe* where the breakdown of dramatic illusion brings death.

Despite its grim vision, *Sweet Movie* has an overwhelming vitality whereas *The Grande Bouffe*, hilarious as it may be, is essentially sterile. Ferreri's film succumbs to the form of decadent art it attacks. In order to overcome cultural boredom and lack of hunger, it force feeds a consumer audience huge quantities of

meat, extravagantly prepared. We leave the theater feeling bloated and stuffed, with a strong desire to fast or fart. In contrast, Makavejev gives us a huge dose of energizing sugar. We leave the theater feeling confused and threatened, wanting to strike out at Makavejev because he engages us in a radical therapy and forces us to confront our own shit. Courageously he follows his material and players wherever they lead him, even if it is beyond his original intention or control. Like Bergman, he willingly goes to the edge of psychic peril, risking his own sanity and freedom and total rejection by his audience, which he met in person at the Berkeley showing with a comic resilience—smiling, shrugging, joking, trying to implicate even the shrillest objectors into his predicament.

PETER BISKIND

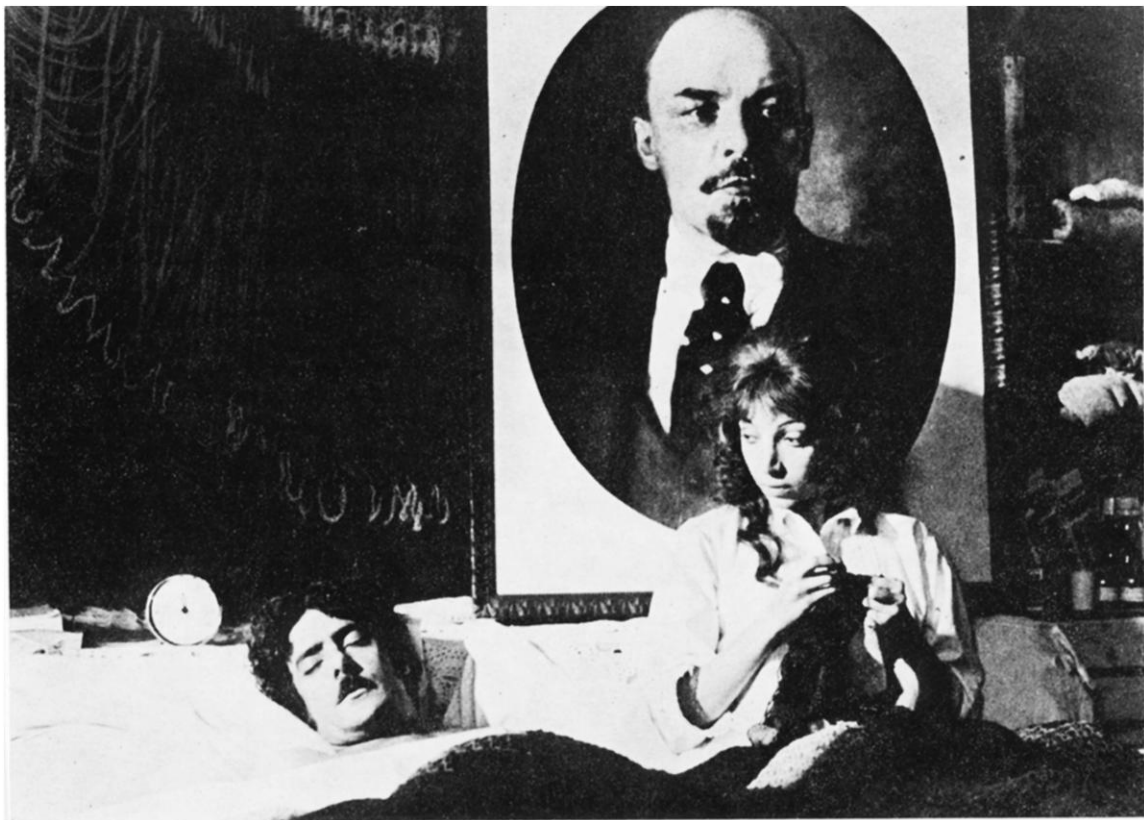
LINA WERTMULLER: The Politics of Private Life

The Seduction of Mimi and *Love and Anarchy*, two recent films by Italian director Lina Wertmüller, have just been released in the United States. They reveal a mature and major talent, one which shows that Fellini's influence on the films of his own country has not been wholly malign but, in the hands of a disciplined disciple (she assisted on *8½*), can be made to serve large and significant purposes.

Fellini's later films, like Antonioni's, are an expression of the felt alienation of modern life, the bifurcation of experience into fact and fancy, public and private or, in terms of the history of film, the classic opposition between Lumière and Méliès. The withdrawal or exile of consciousness from the world leaves consciousness imprisoned in its own subjectivity, and the world a menacing collection of lifeless objects. Wert-

müller moves beyond bourgeois Italian modernism to demystify the experience of alienation by rendering transparent the clouded consciousness of private life. She picks up the pieces of Fellini's world, draws together the fragments of dream and memory on the one hand, and inert spectacle on the other, and shows that they are part of a whole. She reveals the peculiar historical circumstances which gave rise to the cleavage between private life and production, and thereby lays the basis for overcoming it. Unhappily, this vision of wholeness is unavailable to her characters, who perceive it, if at all, by its absence. They are destroyed, for the most part, by their own blindness or the incomprehension of others.

All the important first- and second-generation Italian directors, Rossellini, De Sica, Antonioni,



Giancarlo Gianini and Mariangela Melato: *THE SEDUCTION OF MIMI*

Visconti, and Pasolini, participated to one degree or another in the transformation which overtook neorealism during the Christian Democrat or NATO phase of Italian film when the pressing problems of postwar reconstruction had been overcome and the bourgeoisie has reestablished its prewar control. A director like Pietro Germi, originally a Communist like the others, began his career with films on urban unrest, and moved on to commercially successful but politically innocuous farces like *Divorce Italian Style* and *Seduced and Abandoned*. In *The Seduction of Mimi*, Wertmüller appropriates this tradition, and returns it to an essentially serious purpose. The abrasive comedy that lends to her films an extraordinary vitality at the same time becomes an expression of class. As Wertmüller says in a recent interview, "Cheerful vulgarity is the wit of the poor, their last and extreme defense." *The Seduction of Mimi* is a comic examination of the disintegration of a traditional society under the

impact of industrial development and, at the same time, a demonstration of the superficiality of ideological change in the face of deeply ingrained culture patterns of behavior.

The film opens in Sicily. A group of laborers are working in a rock quarry. A soundtruck appears, delivers a brief, largely unintelligible but impassioned harangue on behalf of a Mafia-backed candidate in the local election, showers the men with leaflets, and drives off. One of the laborers is Mimi (Giancarlo Gianini) who runs afoul of the Mafia hierarchy by naively casting a "secret" ballot for the opposition (Communist) candidate. Fired from his job the next day, he leaves his sexually reticent wife and traditional extended family to look for work in Turin where he finds a job as a metal worker. He becomes radicalized, joins the Communist Party, and falls madly in love with Fiore (Mariangela Melato) with whom he sets up housekeeping and has a child.

Transferred to a refinery in his own home town, he proceeds to lead a double life—with Fiore and their child, on the one hand, and his wife Rosalia (Agostina Belli) on the other. Mimi remains faithful to Fiore (he pleads “exhaustion” to Rosalia), but his inattention to his wife drives her into the arms of another. She becomes pregnant. In a marvellously comic, if predictable, encounter with Rosalia, Mimi throws his principles to the wind and reveals his adherence to the old double standard: sexual freedom for himself and sexual fidelity for his wife. He devises a bizarre revenge. He seduces his rival’s wife Amalia (Elena Fiore) and, in a grand confrontation before the whole town, suggests they exchange babies. In the ensuing turmoil, Mimi’s rival is shot by a Mafia gunman. Mimi goes to jail for the murder; at the moment of his release, he is set upon by mobs of children from the various families for which he is now responsible: Fiore and her child, Rosalia and her child, and Amalia and her six children. In order to support them, he is forced into the employ of the Mafia. The penultimate shot reveals a scene the reverse of the opening one: Mimi is distributing leaflets to the workers of the rock quarry from the same soundtrack we saw at the beginning. He has come full circle. Fiore, coming upon him in this humiliating scene, repudiates him. She drives off in a little red truck marked with a hammer and sickle, leaving Mimi a broken, isolated figure alone in a featureless landscape.

Early in the film, one of Mimi’s comrades tells him that “politics isn’t something you can keep in a watertight compartment—if you buy a pair of pants, politics is right there.” Fiore recognizes this as well. She is introduced selling sweaters on the street next to a table displaying posters of Mao and Marx; a large portrait of

Lenin graces her loft; Marx and Engels gaze paternally upon the lyrically photographed love scene between Mimi and Fiore from their portraits behind her bed. Even as she swells with child, Fiore has politics constantly in mind. “How goes the struggle?” she asks Mimi, but he has thoughts only for his heir-to-be: “My son must lack for nothing . . . My son must be a king.” This marks the beginning of Mimi’s drift to the right as his absorption in traditional family values gradually separates him from the class struggle of his comrades (“I’m trying to get on—I must think of my son”), places him in an implicit alliance with management (“The gang’s not striking. What we need is order”), and leads, finally, to his open employment by the ruling class, symbolized in the film by the Mafia.

In the last section of the film, Mimi becomes obsessed with cleansing his family name and preserving his reputation. Fiore, with her modern, brightly colored sweaters (Mimi’s family is clad in Sicilian black) and disregard for conventional family ties (“No sacrament is going to stop me”) fades into the background, while the foreground is increasingly occupied by Mimi’s baroque plot to humiliate his rival. The ironic turning point, where Mimi-the-victimizer is disclosed as Mimi-the-victim, trapped by his own designs, is a grotesque sequence in which the overweight Amalia, whom he is about to seduce, casts coquettish glances over her shoulder while undraping her obese and doughy body. This is a puzzling sequence, one for which Wertmüller has been and should be criticized. She plays it for laughs, cutting back and forth between Amalia’s body and Mimi’s face, even intervening to exaggerate his impotent terror with wide-angled distortions that transform Amalia into an animate mountain of flesh, heaving and undulating into the foreground while Mimi huddles at the other end of the bed.

It is tempting to regard this sequence as an explicit commentary on Fellini. It is introduced by a Saraghina-like figure (8½) who welcomes Mimi and lends her services to his designs; she functions, in short, as a kind of resident deity in the same way that Marx and Lenin preside



over Fiore's home. More central, however, is the transformation of Amalia from person (albeit slightly ridiculous) to spectacle, that is, to an object with which we, as irresponsible spectators, are morally uninvolved. She has stepped out of *Satyricon* or *Roma*, a bloated and deformed freak. For Fellini, reality as spectacle is never classically proportioned, but is chaotic and incoherent, peopled with monstrosities, deprived of symmetry by the absence of consciousness or a principle of meaning. Unlike Fellini, however, and it is a crucial difference, Wertmüller shows us how Amalia came to be seen this way. Her transformation from subject to object is the end product of a voluntary act situated in a moral universe. Mimi has manipulated her for his own purposes; her presentation as spectacle, transformed into a thing, is the result and external manifestation of larger cultural attitudes expressing themselves through individual behavior. Alienation, in other words, the bifurcation of the world into the seer and the seen, is not an immutable fact of life, not an aesthetic and metaphysical condition, but a moral and historical one.

Wertmüller's interrogation of Fellini is extended in her treatment of the relationship between subjective fantasy and reality. As Mimi's blindness to the political implications of his personal choices betrays him into the hands of the Mafia who manipulate private values like family honor for their own ends, in his imagination he attributes his misfortunes to the persecution of a ubiquitous and omnipotent Mafia chieftain whom he sees lurking behind every tree. This man, distinguished by a triangle of moles on his face, appears to Mimi under three different guises in the course of the film, and comes to signify for him an external fate which he is powerless to elude. Although the ontological status of this figure is unclear (there is an exploiting class in the film for which he seems to stand), it is evident that Mimi's delusions of persecution are an externalization of his own voluntary but unexamined choices.

The connection between the Mafia, moral choice, and Mimi's social and economic position

as family head is underscored in a scene which has been cut from the version of the film released here. According to a plot summary supplied by the distributor, Mimi witnesses the murder of four men by a Mafia gunman in a cafe where he and Fiore are celebrating the christening of their child. Mimi fails to report the murders to the police, presumably because he does not wish to place his son's future in jeopardy. This crucial moral failure sets in motion the chain of events which ultimately thrusts Mimi into the arms of the Mafia. The mystification of reality, the perception of the Mafia not as a social and political force, but as the fantasy representation of ineluctable fate, is self-created, rooted in the collapse of moral and political consciousness. At the same time, Mimi's objective economic position (sole supporter of three families), makes it possible for the Mafia to make him an offer he cannot refuse—class collaboration.

The problem of the appropriation of myth by the ruling class, in this case the Mafia (in comparison, the Communists are flat, even comic figures), will be taken up again in Wertmüller's portrayal of the Fascists in *Love and Anarchy*. In *The Seduction of Mimi*, Mimi's limitations, his inability to see round the corner of his own masculine obsessions, is the source of mechanical, exaggerated, and finally, comic behavior. We are granted a larger knowledge, in terms of which Mimi's limitations are essentially ridiculous. In *Love and Anarchy*, we are deprived of this high ground. Behavior quite similar to Mimi's is seen as tragic rather than comic, because Wertmüller sets herself a more difficult task. She reopens the question of the relationship between politics and private life by posing a contradiction not between the conservative male character and progressive politics, but between love and politics.

Like *The Conformist* and *The Investigation of a Citizen Beyond Suspicion*, *Love and Anarchy* deals with the fascist period, but Wertmüller avoids exotic studies of the psychosexual roots of the authoritarian personality which

themselves perpetuate the alienation of person-ality from production, in favor of an examination of the motives of a common man, a "nobody." The film ends with the words of the Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta which provide a good indication of Wertmüller's intentions towards her subject.

I would like to stress again the horror I feel towards assassinations. Aside from being evil acts in themselves, they are foolish acts, for they harm the very cause they were to serve.

However, these assassins could truly be regarded as saints as well as heroes, but only when their brutal action and the passion that misled them are forgotten and the things remembered will be their martyrdom and the ideal that inspired them.

Love and Anarchy is not so much an analysis of anarchism as a political doctrine, moral or immoral, practical or utopian, as a meditation on the sources of political action. It portrays the anarchist as saint, as the Dostoevskian Holy Fool, Prince Kropotkin as Prince Myshkin.

The film is set in the early thirties, and concerns a peasant, Tunin (Giancarlo Gianini), who resolves to assassinate Mussolini after witnessing the death of an admired friend at the hands of the Fascists. He arrives at a brothel in Rome where he meets his contact Salome (Mariangela Melato), one of the whores, who is to arrange the details of the assassination and escape. In the course of his visits to Salome, Tunin falls in love with Tripolina (Lina Polito), another of the whores. After two idyllic days with her, Tunin is to be awakened on the morning of the assassination attempt at six o'clock. When morning comes, Tripolina bars the door, telling Salome that if she awakens Tunin, Tripolina will turn them in to the police. To awaken Tunin is to send him to his death just as surely as if Salome had pulled the trigger. The women argue, fight, and finally, Salome gives in. Tunin is allowed to oversleep. When he awakens, long after six, he goes berserk, charges downstairs and shoots several soldiers who have entered the brothel on a tour of inspection. He rushes outside, careening madly from one side of the street to the other, upsetting vegetable carts and proclaiming

his defiance of Mussolini, until he is finally caught and executed by having his head brutally smashed against a stone prison wall.

In accord with its dualistic title, *Love and Anarchy* divides its world neatly in two. Public is set against private, politics against love, fascism against anarchism, men against women. The film begins with a montage of portraits of Il Duce—staring eyes, jutting jaw—a perfect example of monumental, larger-than-life fascist iconography. Spatoletti (Eros Pagni), head of Mussolini's security police and one of Salome's customers, appropriates the heroic mythology of Rome's imperial past (he admires the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius; he poses familiarly before the stone god Tiber) and yokes this tradition to metaphors of rampant male sexuality: Mussolini "has a pair of balls big enough to screw the whole world." Spatoletti is harsh, blustering, and overbearing. His world is a public one—an outdoor world of bright sunshine and open, geometric spaces and forms evident in the modern, hard-edged square where Mussolini is to be assassinated during a rally. In contrast to the bombastic Spatoletti who stands confidently astride the world, Tunin is soft, passive, and "feminine." Staring tentatively through nearsighted, watery eyes, he shrinks from the world, taking refuge in the recesses of his oversized clothes. He is a peasant underground man, out of place in the city, awkward with women. Despite his homicidal mission that will take him into the glare of notoriety, his natural space is the enclosed space of the bedroom, lit in warm colors by light filtering through loosely drawn curtains or partly closed shades. When he does venture outside, as he does on one occasion with Tripolina, he blinks unhappily like a newt thrust suddenly into the sunshine, and is quickly banished by Spatoletti, lord of light, monarch of public space.

The interior of the brothel, dark and soft, is the compliment to the fascist world without. Here, the larger contradiction between politics and love is reproduced in the contrast between Salome and Tripolina. Salome is blonde, bawdy, and loud, a perfect match for Spatoletti whom

she manipulates for her own political purposes as he uses her for his sexual ones. The anti-thesis of Salome is Tripolina, who gives voice to the demands of private life. She is, like her surroundings, soft, dark, and sensual. While Salome is a determined anti-Fascist, Tripolina cares for nothing but love. Politics to her is at best irrelevant ("What the hell is politics to us?"), at worst, dangerous ("Justice my ass—the dead are buried, that's justice"). Tunin further reproduces these contradictions within his own person. He is torn between Salome and Tripolina, between his mission which will take him into the brightly lit square and probable death, and the safety of Tripolina's warm embrace.

The brothel mirrors the regimentation of the fascist state. Female sexuality has been assimilated to the system of capitalist commodity exchange. For these women, family and private life have almost ceased to exist, thereby rendering their longing for love and personal satisfaction more pathetic and desperate. Under these circumstances, this aspiration becomes utopian and destructive, an end in itself and therefore an impossible illusion. As the film shows, there can be no love under Fascism. The women live in an enforced community without privacy (they are constantly intruding on one another), while

their leisure time is poisoned by mutual recriminations and bickering which reflect their competitive position within the "community." They are no more than wage slaves who neither expect personal satisfaction from their work nor are able to take refuge in family.

The scene in which the women are competing with one another for the favors of their male customers, preening and prancing, striking grotesque poses, is a replica of a scene in *Roma*. Again we have, for a moment, Fellini's world of spectacle—bizarre and gross. Wertmüller has already shown, economically and unsentimentally, these women as people, unattractive perhaps, but human nevertheless. We never forget that these frozen postures are merely the distorted surfaces of mutilated aspirations. Fellini's spectacular world is thus reclaimed, grounded in human situation and historical circumstance. At least in Salome's case, fascism is directly linked to the devastation of her private ambitions. It was the murder of her lover by the Fascists which drove her to prostitution. The fascist negation of private life is no different from the bourgeois deification of the family. In both cases, people are rendered incapable of political action.

Both Tripolina and Salome reflect, in opposite ways, the alienation of privacy from production.

*Lina Polito
and
Mariangela
in LOVE
AND
ANARCHY*



Both Tripolina and Salome divorce love from anarchy, life from politics, and consequently entertain a partial view of Tunin who becomes a sentimentalized reflection of their own needs. To Salome, Tunin is heroic political man: "I thought you were a saint, because you were ready to die for an ideal." To Tripolina, he is exclusively a lover, and a reminder of her own lost innocence. These dualities, gradually developed and elaborated as the story progresses, achieve their most schematic expression in the scene in which Tripolina and Salome, Love and Anarchy personified, wrestle on the bathroom floor for control of Tunin's fate. The triumph of Tripolina and the consequent conspiracy to allow Tunin to oversleep set off an explosion which brings this carefully constructed house of cards abruptly to the ground. The casual manner which has characterized the film's treatment of its themes is suddenly shattered by an entirely unexpected outburst of emotion. Tunin is revealed in all his contradictory fullness—humiliated and terrified to the point of imbecility, and at the same time exhibiting the capacity for a surprising and alarming amount of violence. He viciously turns on Tripolina, showering her with blows and curses, and then rushes from the room to confront the soldiers below. There follows a series of a painful, hallucinatory scenes in which Tunin veers wildly from the ridiculous to the sublime, until he is finally killed by the Fascists who easily match his violence with their own.

What can we make of all this? On the level of the alienated culture of capitalism, which dictates the roles and perceptions of the principals, it seems indeed that love and anarchy don't mix. Like the mothers who hover at the fringes of the drama—Tunin's mother (at the beginning, baby Tunin's question: "What's an anarchist?" is answered by his mother with wry irony: "Someone who kills a prince or a king and is hanged for it") or the maternal figure nursing a baby outside the room (like his mother's room, Tunin remarks) where Tunin and Tripolina first make love—Tripolina plays a traditional conservative role. But she finds that to protect the

males of the oppressed class from the oppressor, from prison or certain death, the mother must not only come between him and the oppressor, but between him and his own aspirations for self-respect, between him and history and life itself. For in reality, love and anarchy are not antagonistic, but indissolubly bound together. It is Tripolina's and Salome's failure to see Tunin as a whole person, at once anarchist and lover, that leads to their fatal miscalculation. It is their inability to see that the intended assassination neither stems from an abstract ideal nor is an inexplicable act of desperate whimsy, but is the fruit of his own deepest desires to live with dignity ("Even the chickens laughed at me—the time comes when a man has to say 'enough'") that prepares the ground for the ultimate tragedy.

And what of Tunin? In a sense, the film offers an alternative to the flippant answer provided by his mother to the question which begins the film. Tunin, naked with fear, stripped of dignity, nauseated at the sight of the death inflicted with his own hand, humiliated by the failure even of his attempt to commit suicide, yet attains the unheroic but not immodest dignity of resistance—the refusal to talk under torture, the refusal to capitulate to overwhelming power. It is the heroism, in short, of the forgotten ones. "Who are you?" Spatoletti demands, sure that an anarchist assassin must *be* somebody. "Nobody," Tunin answers.

